

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cave Creek Man Receives Prison Term for Theft, Arson

(Phoenix, Ariz. – May 23, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced that Raymond Merolle, 42, of Cave Creek, was sentenced to 7.25 years in prison by Maricopa County Superior Court Commissioner James T. Blomo. Merolle was found guilty in January of two counts of theft and one count of arson.

Merolle was convicted of the theft of a 38-foot cigarette boat and high-dollar recreational vehicles valued at more than \$400,000. Merolle used the marine identifiers (boat name, hull number and Coast Guard registration number) from different cigarette boat to disguise the real identity of the stolen boat.

The arson charge results from a car that was drenched with gasoline and set on fire in a desert wash at 54th Avenue and Union Hills in Glendale. Merolle's DNA was found at the scene. The vehicle belonged to Merolle's ex-girlfriend.

Merolle has multiple prior convictions for possession of stolen property in New York and New Jersey. He headed a notorious Long Island auto theft and "chop shop" gang that was known as "The Untouchables." He testified in connection with a New York murder trial that his ring had been responsible for over \$1 million in stolen cars.

He was taken into custody in January. This conviction is the result of an investigation conducted by the Arizona Department of Insurance Fraud Unit, the Chandler Police Department and the Glendale Police Department. Assistant Attorney General Gail Thackeray prosecuted this case.

###